

THE LEAFLET

The Monthly Magazine of the Vallarta Botanical Garden

August 2016



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The Monthly Magazine of the Vallarta Botanical Garden

Puerto Vallarta, Jalisco, México

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Cover: *Stanhopea radiosa* and
Euglossa viridissima
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Curator's Corner

Dear Friends of the Garden,

One of the most thoroughly enjoyable of rare pleasures is to meet a kindred spirit who instantly feels like an old friend. It is even more rare for this to happen with an influential and popular celebrity, but that's exactly what I experienced when I had the distinct pleasure to meet Lila Downs while she and her family visited the Garden in mid July. Lila is one of Mexico's most popular and widely acclaimed musicians and represents our country admirably all over the world. It's here though that she calls home and her indigenous roots are proudly celebrated in her music, her clothes, and her conversation.

One of the causes that Lila fearlessly champions is cultural identity and language. Her mother Anita, who accompanied Lila during her recent visit, grew up speaking only the Mixtec language and did not learn Spanish until she was fifteen years old. Once Lila grew up and embraced her cultural heritage she has been a role model and spokesperson for cultural identity and the need to keep our diversity of languages alive and thriving. While language can be recorded in books, audio, and film, they constantly need to be actively spoken and embraced by their people or an essential part of their

fabric becomes torn. Language is not stagnant, but living and breathing and constantly changing. It is the soul of a culture and grows with and through the experiences and consciousness of its people.

In a similar way, plants must be preserved as living and thriving components of their ecosystems. While representatives of their genetic diversity can often be kept viable for years in sterile seed-banks, once they go missing from their native environments there is a tragic and irrevocable loss that should be avoided at all costs.

Lila and her family just became the Vallarta Botanical Garden's newest Copa de Oro members and purchased the commission of a new artful commemorative tile celebrating their visit. While we warmly welcome them here and wish Lila the best with her art and advocacy we are also happy to receive new friends who value the fantastic diversity of this planet and champion its preservation during an era of great change.

Warmest regards from the Garden,
Bob Price, Founder and Curator, VBG

Lila Downs & Family with
Garden Staff Bob Price and Neil Gerlowski
Photo: Homero Castrejón





Stanhopea tigrina & *Eufriesea* sp.
Photo: Neil Gerlowski

Smell is a potent wizard that transports you across thousands of miles and all the years you have lived. –Helen Keller

Orchids and Bees Prepared for Broadcast — BBC filming in the Garden

By Neil Gerlowski, Executive Director, VBG

Humans aren't the only ones who apply perfume for their amorous intentions. Male bees of the tribe *Euglossini* exert enormous efforts to assemble unique personal colognes to attract females. They do so by bathing themselves in the fragrances of certain flowers and even have special pouches on their hind legs to collect aromas which their mates apparently find irresistible. Their main sources of "odoriferous compounds" are orchids in the subtribes of Stanhopeinae and Catasetinae, whose constituent species are *exclusively* pollinated by male euglossine bees which fly from as far away as 10 kilometers in hunt for the right smell.

Another group of nature enthusiasts just flew a little further to catch all of this in film. The British Broadcast Company (BBC) sent a crew from London to the Vallarta Botanical Garden including a producer, researchers, and cameramen. They worked along with Garden staff and volunteers for an entire week to film native Mexican orchids



Mormodes ramirezii &
Euglossa viridissima
Photo: David Roubik

and their special pollinators. With an average of 14 hours of work per day, they left with hours of film including time-lapse sequences of blossoming orchids and high-speed aerial bee battles along with fragrance capture and the associated incidental pollination which benefits the orchids.

These many hours of footage will be edited down extensively during production for maybe just a few minutes of magnificent and action-packed video in the upcoming BBC documentary series under the working title, "MÉXICO, Nature's Carnival." The dramatic high-resolution productions that the BBC does so well provide excellent connections to the general public with the astonishingly resplendent phenomena of nature. Their coverage of orchids and orchid bees will undoubtedly attract a whole new audience of aficionados to these delightful plants and their equally fascinating pollinators.

BBC producer Victoria Bromley and cameraman Kevin Flay at work in the Vallarta Botanical Garden, July 2016
Photo: Neil Gerlowski



Orchid of the Month

Mormodes ramirezii S. Rosillo

By Alejandra Flores Argüelles

Orchids of the genus *Mormodes* are known as “goblin orchids” for the unusual twisted shape of their flower. Their genus name stems from the Greek words *mormo* meaning “ghost” and *oides*, which means “resembling”.

These orchids are solely pollinated by male Euglossine bees, which are attracted by their intense fragrances. Their flowers don't allow for fertilization until their pollen is removed; at which time their column straightens and rises backwards to expose the stigma (feminine part) for pollination.

Mormodes ramirezii is a species endemic to Jalisco only found in the *Municipio* (county) of Cuautitlán, a mountainous region near the border with Colima State. It grows in oak forest in the Pacific slope at elevations of approximately 1,750 meters. It flowers from July to September. It can be distinguished from other species of its genus by its arrow-shaped labellum (lip) and also for its weak herbal fragrance, not the powerful perfume that is usual for this group.



The Vallarta Botanical Garden has just one specimen of *Mormodes ramirezii* at the moment and this year its flowers miraculously opened on the first day that BBC's crew arrived to film here (Saturday, July 9th). It remained in flower for nearly a week and had up to 15 or so bees frequenting it for nearly that entire time. While its aroma may hardly be detectable to humans, it was certainly a powerful draw for their pollinators.



Orchids for Your Home Garden — Jump on an order with us!

The VBG is putting together an orchid order from a major Mexican orchid wholesaler for some of the same species that the BBC traveled here to film. If you're interested in joining us for the order, please send an email to T.J. Hartung at development@vbgardens.org. Deadline: August 31, 2016.

Not only do these orchids provide a captivating spectacle with their exquisite flowers, but the bees that they attract provide for dramatic interactions that allow for hours of enthralled observation. Since some of these orchids are now threatened in the wild, your home garden or patio collection can provide local orchid bees with the right fragrances so they can attract their mates and reproduce. Gardening with native plants is a win win for people and our environment!

A Royally Flamboyant Tree — *Delonix regia*

By Al Rouyer

The Flamboyant-tree, as the Royal Poinciana (*Delonix regia*) is also known in English, is one of the most commonly planted ornamental trees throughout the tropical world. When in full bloom during the summer it has a fiery crown of exquisite flowers with intense color and majestic form. Hence one of its names in Spanish, *árbol de fuego* (tree of fire). Native to Madagascar, it is now so widely distributed along Mexico's populated coastal zones that it is often erroneously assumed to be native.

Identification: *Delonix regia* is a small to medium size tree that can grow to 12 meters tall. With their broad, spreading crowns they make for excellent shade trees. The compound, doubly pinnate bright green leaves have a very attractive fern-like and feathery appearance. The leaf

is from 30-50 centimeters long, with 20-40 pairs of leaflets or pinnae and each of these is further divided into 10-20 secondary leaflets. The bark is smooth and light brown to gray. In full bloom the masses of red or orange-red flowers nearly eliminate the foliage from view. Each flower is 10-13 centimeters across with four spreading petals. When the flowers have fallen, the tree produces hundreds of saber shaped seedpods up to 45 centimeters long and 5 centimeters wide that upon maturity become woody and dark brown to black in color. The machete-like appearance of these seedpods give rise to one of its common names in Mexico, *machetón* and youngsters sometimes use them as makeshift toy swords for imaginary swashbuckling adventures.



Delonix regia
Photo: Ulises Antonio Sánchez Mireles

Trees of the garden
Photo: Alejandra Flores Argüelles

**To be poor and be without trees,
is to be the most starved human being in the world.
To be poor and have trees, is to be completely rich
in ways that money can never buy.
— Clarissa Pinkola Estés**

Give Every Month – Become a Garden “GEM”

Dividing your contributions to the Vallarta Botanical Garden into monthly payments can help you better budget your annual giving and allows us a dependable monthly income to carry the Garden through the slower times of the year. A new Give Every Month “GEM” page is now up on the Garden’s website www.vbgardens.org for you to begin this kind of contribution today.

Commemorative Cantera Benches

Would you like to honor or memorialize someone with a permanent cantera bench at the Vallarta Botanical Garden? Benches are finished with beautiful hand-painted ceramic tiles. We can help you create a custom design with text and images of your choice. Prices are at \$7,000 USD for a *Banca Real* (Regal Bench) and \$5,000 USD for a *Banca Distintiva* (Distinctive Bench). Dividing this up into payments over the course of three years is a commitment of only \$194 or \$139 USD per month. These gifts qualify for tax deductible contributions in Mexico, the US, and Canada. Interested? Great! Please visit our website or call 322 223 6182 and ask to speak to the Garden’s Executive Director, Neil Gerlowski or Membership Coordinator, Michaela Flores.

Your Legacy Lives on at the VBG

Including the Vallarta Botanical Garden in your wills, trusts, and estate planning is an investment in the long-term viability of this important natural sanctuary for Puerto Vallarta and the exquisite flora of Mexico and world tropics. A member of the Garden’s Legacy Committee would be happy to talk to you about the best options for optimizing your philanthropic potential and further blessing a community. Please write to info@vbgardens.org.

Mexican Bird of the Month

Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher (*Myiodynastes luteiventris*)

By Greg R. Homel www.birdinginpuertovallarta.com/ birdingadventures@mac.com

Wide-eyed birders crowd select forested canyons adorning the US-Mexican borderlands in Southeast Arizona during spring and summer, each hoping to catch a glimpse of the dynamic, relatively large and beautifully plumaged Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher. Up there they call them “Southeast Arizona specialties,” but truth be told, these beautiful tyrant flycatchers are actually very widespread Austral migrants. They range from Colombia to Bolivia on the forested eastern flanks of the Andes and adjacent Amazonian foothills during our winter then move out of South America to nest throughout most of Central America and Mexico during the Boreal spring and summer months. Probably less than 1% of their total population actually reach Southeast Arizona’s mountains, their sole nesting outpost within the bounds of the United States.

Here in western Mexico, Sulphur-bellied Flycatchers abound in the lower to mid elevation foothills from April through early September... and the Vallarta Botanical Garden is situated at the perfect altitude to enjoy these birds! Here they can be seen hawking relatively large, flying insect prey from the treetops—

bees, wasps and even cicadas—as their strange, “rubber ducky-like” vocalizations emanate from the now verdant hillsides.

Seasonally monogamous, these impressive birds form pairs, and place their nests in tree cavities—both natural and those built by local woodpeckers, especially the Golden-cheeked variety. By late September all the young have fledged, and like the Yellow-green Vireo, the austral migrant featured in last month’s edition of *The Leaflet*, none remain for the winter.

Relatively few birders are wise to the unique opportunities afforded them in Mexico during the summer rainy season. Those from north of the border do themselves a favor by taking their birding passion south during their summer vacations. Here in the Vallarta area they leave the crowds behind and enjoy summer’s luxuriant greenery, while swimming in the tropical blue Pacific, taking in the smell of a late afternoon monsoonal thunderstorm, and, of course, all the while enjoying birds like the Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher, which eludes our strictly winter visitors.



Myiodynastes luteiventris
Photos: Greg R. Homel

Would you like to make birding history in Puerto Vallarta and the Banderas Bay?

The Vallarta Botanical Garden is just one of dozens of amazing local birding hotspots within the count circle of the annual Puerto Vallarta / Bahía de Banderas Christmas Bird Count (CBC). This project, organized by the Audubon Society, is the longest running and most important citizen science project in the world. **Now is not to early to schedule your participation for the 2016 Christmas Bird Count scheduled for December 17th.** Just beforehand, on December 10th, the VBG will hold their Crash Course on Birding in Tropical Western Mexico for participants to prepare for their adventures in scouting and observations the following week.

Over 200 species have been counted within the Puerto Vallarta CBC in past events, but over 100 additional species are documented to occur at this time within our region. That means participants are so far only documenting about two thirds of the avian diversity that abounds during the day of the count. Additional prepared participants and a better coordination of efforts could result in placing Puerto Vallarta as a top contender for the number one CBC circle in North America. These efforts will not only boost the ecotourism appeal of Puerto Vallarta, but also serve to better document and protect our rich natural biodiversity. **Interested? Please write to birdingadventures@mac.com or educadorambiental@vbgardens.org for more information.**



The Impending Extinction of a Western Mexican Zapote - *Diospyros xolocotzii*

By: Dr. Santiago Arizaga, Coordinator for the B.S. Program in Environmental Studies,
Escuela Nacional de Estudios Superiores, Unidad Morelia-UNAM

Currently our planet is suffering an unprecedented environmental deterioration which is ironically the fault of the human race, the species often described as the most rational, thoughtful, and successful. This environmental deterioration is principally associated with the loss of natural vegetative cover which leads to the extinction of many species.

An example of extinction occurring right at this time is the wild black zapote of the species *Diospyros xolocotzii*. It's a woody plant that looks like a bush during the first part of its life cycle but which later supports a dominant branch until it acquires the form of a tree reaching up to twelve meters in height.

This wild zapote was discovered almost thirty years ago along the periphery of the City of Morelia, Michoacán in

a wetland known as La Mintzita. During the last five years we have discovered an additional four localities with this plant in Michoacán and yet another in Guanajuato. It is quite possible that additional populations have yet to be discovered in this vicinity. This suggests that in the recent past the wild black zapote had a much wider distribution principally in the Cuitzeo basin and was a common component of the local subtropical scrub vegetation.

Although Michoacán boasts the greatest quantity of localities of this zapote, altogether the number of wild specimens is very small, with an estimate of less than a hundred individuals originating from seeds of the same clonal colony (genetically identical). From this point of view of population ecology these quantities are not likely to maintain the survival of the species which means that it's in the process of extinction.



One of the two young seedlings of *Diospyros xolocotzii* recently planted at the Vallarta Botanical Garden
Photo: Ulises Antonio Sánchez Mireles

In the case of Guanajuato, the species shows a more favorable situation in quantity with an estimate of more than a thousand individuals yet many of these are also clones. This single population is distributed along just one ravine resulting in a high susceptibility to drastic decline from threats such as wildfire, change of land use, or the adverse effects of climate change. Therefore, this population is experiencing serious evolutionary problems and the actions of man will control its destiny and that of its canyon ecosystem that it inhabits.

While the current status of wild black zapote appears

bleak, it's always worth saving what we can of the planet's biodiversity. When wild populations dwindle, the creation of diverse *ex situ* collections (maintained away from their natural range) rises to the utmost importance and at times is the only solution for the conservation of some species. The Morelia campus of the UNAM is encouraging the *ex situ* conservation of the black zapote (*Diospyros xolocozii*) and we are delighted that the Vallarta Botanical Garden has accepted specimens to grow, care for, and share with their tens of thousands of annual visitors. With collaborations like this, we can potentially save yet another species from otherwise eminent extinction.

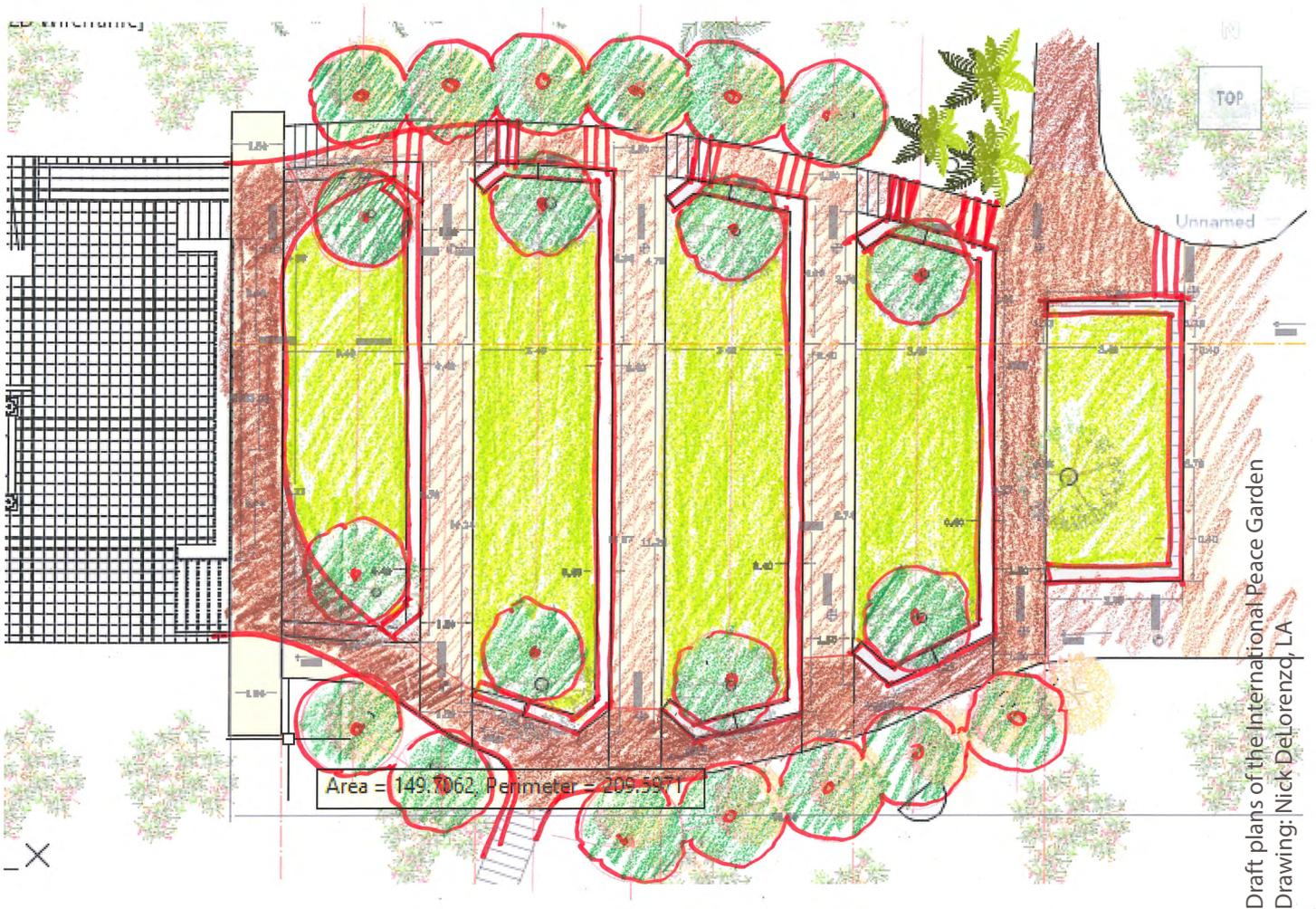
Mature wild zapote in its natural habitat.
Photo: Dr. Santiago Arizaga



Design of an International Peace Garden

The grounds of the Vallarta Botanical Garden are already a place of calm, solace, and healing of body, mind, and soul. The recently completed chapel, “*Nuestra Señora del Jardín*” (Our Lady of the Garden) has added a new element of spirituality to the garden experience. A new design by Architects Nick DeLorenzo and Cesar Amezcua will complement the approach to the chapel with space of incredible beauty and purposeful function. It will feature plants of the Mediterranean and the Holy Land along with Mexican wildflowers. A combination of shade and sun provide an inviting usable space throughout the year for activities from educational programming and family enjoyment to quiet meditation. The tiered benches may allow the space to later be used as theater seating for open-air concerts and performances. It will be a welcoming place for people of all backgrounds to come together in harmony with nature and focus on our collective power to make this world a better place.

Please contact garden management today to become part of the development of the new International Peace Garden at the Vallarta Botanical Garden! Please write to info@vbgardens.org for more information.





Draft rendering of the International Peace Garden
Rendering: Cesar Amezcua



An inspired moment
Photo: Ulises Antonio Sánchez Mireles

Call to Artists — Exhibit with us!

By Neil Gerlowski, Executive Director, VBG

Zaidé Gómez Carillo, Marketing Manager, Plaza Galerías

& Buri Gray, President of the Board, Museo de Arte Peter Gray

Plaza Galerías, our region's largest shopping mall, has invited the Vallarta Botanical Garden to organize another nature-based art exhibition, this time with the specific theme of "Birds and Their Habitats." The exhibit is scheduled to be featured in the mall's main events hall (in front of the Liverpool Department Store) from September 17th to October 13, 2016. Afterwards, the exhibit will travel to the University of Guadalajara's local coastal campus until mid-November and finally to the Vallarta Botanical Garden until the end of December.

This exhibition will especially focus on native and endemic birds and the fascinating flora of the habitats that support them. We hope to inspire a conservation-oriented public through engaging imaginations with stunning and creative human constructs interpreting our natural world.

Local and visiting artists are encouraged to submit pieces for consideration in this exhibition which will be selected by a committee of representatives from the Garden, the Mall, and the University. Pieces may include paintings, photos, and sculptures. For more information on the exhibition or how to send submissions, please write to eventos@vbgardens.org. The deadline for submissions is September 1, 2016.



Cacicus melanicterus
Photo: Abigail Mosqueda Soto



ORCHIDACEAE
Ornithocephalus iridifolius
Rchb. F.
México y Guatemala

Ornithocephalus iridifolius
Photo: Ulises Antonio Sánchez Mireles



Visiting students from the
Universidad Tecnológica de Bahía de Banderas
Photo: Alejandra Flores Argüelles

VBG Education & Volunteer Program Report, July 2016

By Alejandra Flores Argüelles, Plant Science Coordinator, VBG

A large and diverse group of students visited us from the Universidad Tecnológica de Bahía de Banderas with students majoring in Tourism Management and Development. A second smaller group from the Liceo del Valle Primaria Bahía de Banderas also enjoyed an educational experience here in the Garden.

A few highlights of the many exciting projects our volunteers worked on this month include assisting BBC bee researchers in luring in bees for filming and a major remodeling project for the Garden's plant sales nursery. Not only will our plant sales nursery look better than ever before, but it will have a wider and more exciting selection of plants for purchase!

Monthly tally of visits, program participation, and volunteer service:

Total member visits to the VBG:	89
Total non-member visits to the VBG:	2072
Total complimentary entries*:	55
Total participation in 1 pm tours**:	30
	150

*The Vallarta Botanical Garden is pleased to provide complimentary entry for educational programs for school groups with advanced reservations. Currently, these are only offered on Wednesdays. Requests for reservations may be delivered by email to educadorambiental@vbgardens.org and should be sent at least five days prior to the requested date of visitation. Requests for reservations are granted on a first come, first served basis and are subject to scheduling restrictions.

**1 pm tours are offered daily from December through March and otherwise only when volunteers are available.

Visiting students from Liceo del Valle
Primaria Bahía de Banderas
Photo: Alejandra Flores Argüelles



Vallarta Botanical Garden's Calendar

DATE	EVENT	COST	
	GARDENS ARE CLOSED ON MONDAYS FROM APRIL UNTIL DECEMBER		
We stay open!	The Vallarta Botanical Gardens remain open year round even during the months of August and September when many local attractions close for the season. — This is just one part of our commitment to building our beloved Puerto Vallarta region as Mexico's premier tourism destination!	--	
14	Sep	Alexander Von Humboldt Birthday Celebration — A nod to one of our botanical inspirations! Birthday cake will be available to visitors at 2:00 pm in the Visitor Center (while supplies last).	Included with entry
16	Sep	Independence Day (Mexico) — the Garden remains open this day and is a great place to celebrate!	Included with entry

* Some activities subject to change. The most current calendar, often with links to further event information, can be viewed at www.vbgardens.org/calendar.



Indispensable Independence
Photo: Sallie Sales

Garden Hours

Open 7 days/wk

Open 6 days/wk

Early "Bird" Opening

Daily Guided Tour

9 am – 6 pm

for the months of Dec., Jan., Feb., & March (except Christmas & New Year's Day)
(**Closed Mondays**) April, May, June, July, Aug., Sept., Oct., & Nov.

8 am every Thursday offered for the months of Dec., Jan., Feb., & March

1 pm (Offered for the months of Dec., Jan., Feb., & March)



Michaela Flores, Membership Coordinator, VBG
memberships@vbgardens.org

From the Membership Desk

Hallo. I'm writing from Germany where I'm visiting for two months. Hopefully, I'll work in some botanical explorations while I'm away. While many Puerto Vallarta residents are away at this time of the year, the Garden stays open and is a great place to beat the heat for those of you still in the area. The fresh mountain breeze through the Hacienda de Oro Visitor Center is a dependable occurrence on most afternoons. Also, except when high waters make it inadvisable, a dip in the refreshing currents of the Los Horcones River (accessed from our River Walk) cools the temperature and relaxes the mind. As if these reasons alone are not enough to entice, many of our favorite plants only flower during the summer season. *Auf wiedersehen* – so long, farewell.

Members: please always wear your membership card when visiting the Garden. This helps our staff and volunteers recognize you as members and offer valuable discounts on your Garden purchases and other important benefits.

Can you find your name on our WALL OF BENEFACTORS?

If you're not yet "on the wall" we invite you to join the family that preserves the Garden forever!

Becoming a member is easy & provides great benefits:
www.vbgardens.org/memberships

A high resolution image of this photograph is available at www.vbgardens.org/benefactors



We would like to acknowledge and thank the following supporters:

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ALAN & PATRICIA BICKELL

RUBEN COTA & MICHAEL SCHULTZ

DEE DANERI

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Photo: Abigail
Mosqueda Soto

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 Michaela Flores: memberships@vbgardens.org Thank you.**

(S) = student (I) = individual ☼ = deceased

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Your Donations to the Vallarta Botanical Garden are Greatly Appreciated

México



- **Tax-deduction receipts** are available for donations to the Vallarta Botanical Garden made through the *Fundación Punta de Mita* (FPM).
- **Please send an email earmarking your gift for the Vallarta Botanical Garden to donaciones@fundacionpuntademita.org with a copy to info@vbgardens.org**
- In this email please include your name, the date your gift was sent, and the amount of your gift.

Checks may be mailed to:

Fundación Punta de Mita, A.C.
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Punta Mita, Nayarit, C.P. 63734 México.

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Canada



- Our educational programs qualify for **tax-deduction receipts** provided by The Canadian Children's Shelter of Hope Foundation (CCSHF)

Cheques may be mailed to:

Canadian Children's Shelter of Hope Foundation
87 Lavinia Ave
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M6S 3H9
Canada

Please write "VBG" for "Vallarta Botanical Gardens" on your cheques.

Alternatively, you may donate using a credit card through CanadaHelps.org (whose donation page is linked to the CCSHF website www.ccsHF.ca) selecting the "Vallarta Botanical Gardens Fund."

USA



- Our direct support 501(c)3, "Friends of Vallarta Botanical Gardens, A.C." issues **tax-deduction receipts**:

Checks may be mailed to:

Friends of Vallarta Botanical Gardens, A.C.
759 North Campus Way
Davis, CA 95616

Wire transfers / direct deposits are accepted:

Please write to treasurer@vbgardens.org for routing and account numbers.

Credit Card Payments:

Call us w/ your card info: +52 322 223 6182

PayPal: www.vbgardens.org/fvbg

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